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Paws for dementia

Riley, C, Campbell, S and Clark, AJ

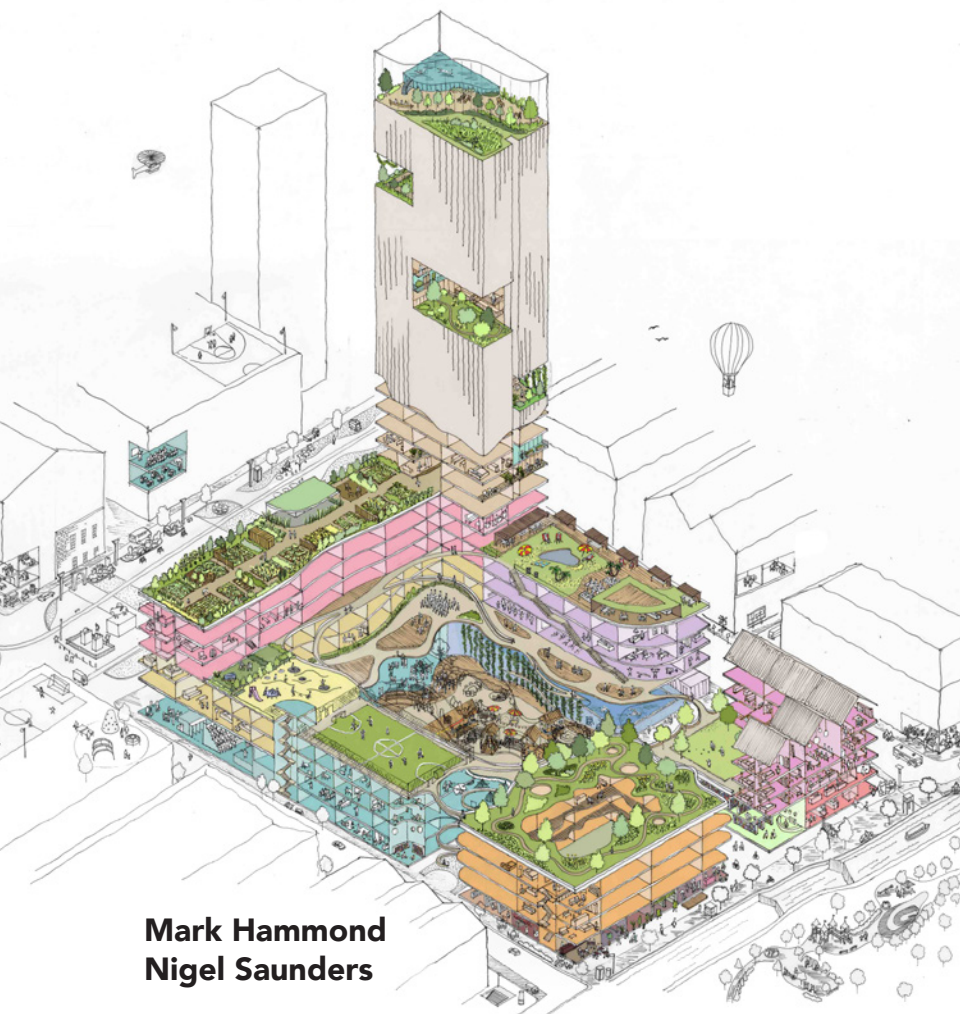
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A Design for Life

/// Urban practices for an
age-friendly city



A Design for Life: Urban practices for an age-friendly city

Mark Hammond (*Manchester School of Architecture*)

Nigel Saunders (*Pozzoni Architecture*)

With contributions from:

Tine Buffel (*University of Manchester*)

Sarah Campbell (*Manchester Metropolitan University*)

Andrew Clark (*University of Salford*)

Wendy Cocks (*Care and Repair England*)

Sarah Day (*Manchester School of Architecture*)

Joe Dempsey (*Manchester School of Architecture*)

Rita Newton (*University of Manchester*)

Cath Riley (*GM Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust*)

Stefan White (*Manchester Metropolitan University*)

Produced in collaboration with GM Ageing Hub Housing, Planning and Ageing group (www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Additional images, where not otherwise reference:

Centre for Ageing Better 'Age-Positive Images' library.

<https://ageingbetter.resourcespace.com/>

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Correspondence: m.hammond@mmu.ac.uk

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Salford, UK

The importance of social programmes that activate the built environment, responding to the diverse (social, medical or cultural) needs and aspirations of older people

Contributors: Cath Riley (Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust), Sarah Campbell (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Andrew Clark (University of Salford)

Being able to get out and about in the areas where they live matters to people living with dementia, but this can be difficult.

Paws for Dementia was launched in 2018 by the Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust Open Doors Network with funding through Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. It provides group-based dog walking opportunities for people living with dementia and family carers. It supports those living with dementia who are patients at local NHS dementia assessment wards as well as those living in the community. The group meets fortnightly at a park in Salford and is supported by NHS staff and volunteers.



Its a Dogs Life (but it doesn't have to be): The Paws for Dementia group, run by GM Mental Health Trust

Paws for Dementia provides the opportunity for those who own dogs to walk them in a sociable setting with others. It is also open to anyone who wants to come along and who may have no previous connection to dogs. The benefits, though, reach beyond this. It provides a chance to interact with others in outdoor surroundings; enables in-patients to reconnect with non-clinical environments and to interact with individuals away from ward environment; and offers a way for health professionals to assess outside of the clinical setting. Most importantly, Paws for Dementia is a way of supporting people living with dementia to regularly leave their homes and engage with other people and places and remain connected to a wider social sphere.

The park where the group met was crucial and highlights the value of ensuring green spaces are accessible to all. It was well kept and maintained with a range of features including bandstand, play areas, sports facilities, accessible tree lined flat walkways. It was on a regular bus route and had a car park, small cafe, and crucially toilets and ample seating.

The wellbeing benefits of engaging in seemingly 'ordinary' or routine activity such as walking a dog in the company of others should not be underestimated. 'Paws for Dementia' provides proof that people living with dementia can still get out and about in their neighbourhoods provided there are resources available and individuals with the vision to help make that happen.

"It gets me out as well, because it's hard to make friends, you know, because I always had my family around me so I never bothered... Well I can just walk and be out, you're not on your own, are you?"

Person living with dementia

Further reading:

Paws for Dementia was funded by Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust. The evaluation was completed with the support of work programme 4 of the ESRC (part of UK Research and Innovation) and the NIHR funded Neighbourhoods and Dementia mixed-methods study (<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/neighbourhoods-and-dementia/>).



A Design For Life: Urban practices for an age-friendly city is a guide for architects, planners, developers and policy-makers about their role in addressing the changing needs and aspirations of an ageing society. Through essays and case studies, this pocketbook highlights the opportunities that arise when urban design professionals proactively challenge common stereotypes about the ageing process, and work together to develop practices, policies and designs that value older people as diverse, intersectional citizens.

Dr Mark Hammond is a Senior Lecturer at Manchester School of Architecture, Manchester Metropolitan University. His research investigates ageing and inequality in the urban environments.

Nigel Saunders is a Director at Pozzoni Architecture. He has 25 years experience as a practicing architect, with a particular focus on developing housing for an ageing population.

